

July 27, 2000

## Governor Bush's Agenda for America

*This paper summarizes Governor George W. Bush's stated positions on the issues in the presidential election. The information in this paper is taken exclusively from the official web site of the Bush campaign, georgewbush.com. Some of the stated positions can be found at the website under "issues" and others may be found in the speeches, news releases, or fact sheets. The website is, of course, updated periodically, and it should be consulted for the most recent information. The speeches are highly recommended for those readers who want a fuller description of the Governor's approach to government. The fact sheets are recommended for quick summaries of his positions.*

### Agriculture

"Agriculture is not just one industry among many. It is the heart of our economy. And it symbolizes some of the best and finest things about our nation: independence, hard work, risk taking, and sacrifice. Farmers contribute to the wealth of America, but — with their commitment to faith, family, and the land — they also contribute to the character of our country. I am honored to be the Governor of the 2nd largest farm state. And I know when farmers hurt, we must help."

#### Governor Bush supports

- recent efforts to reverse decades of supply control management so that U.S. farmers can be unleashed to plant in response to market demand, not government programs
- emergency assistance in the form of direct payments, available in a timely manner
- a reformed crop insurance system with more crops covered and a better premium structure
- new tax-deferred savings accounts (FARRM accounts) that allow farmers to safeguard their incomes against downturns in the farm economy
- tax reform, including phasing out the death tax on farms
- ethanol
- opening markets overseas for U.S. farm products, eliminating agricultural export subsidies and tariffs worldwide ("To foreign governments, the next president must carry a simple and unequivocal message: We will no longer tolerate favoritism and unfair subsidies for your national industries. We want to compete, and compete on level ground.")

## Campaign Finance Reform

### Governor Bush supports

- banning 'soft money' contributions from labor unions and corporations because members/shareholders have no say in how those contributions are given
- enforcement of the *Beck* decision and enactment of effective 'Paycheck Protection' legislation so union members can decide whether to direct money to politics
- raising individual contribution limits
- instant disclosure of contributions (Governor Bush was the first presidential candidate to voluntarily implement this reform with his near-real-time disclosure on the Internet.)
- the "Section 527" bill that recently passed Congress and was signed into law (He believes "third-party groups should have to disclose who is funding their ads.")

## Civil Rights

"We must teach our children to respect people from all walks of life. We must teach our children to respect people whose skin is of a different color. We must teach our children to respect those whose ancestry or religion is different from their own. Finally, we must teach our children that we are one nation, one people, all American."

### Governor Bush

- opposes quotas and racial preferences but supports 'affirmative access' to open the doors of opportunity through programs such as the Texas' 10-percent plan, where those who graduate in the top 10 percent of their high school class are automatically admitted to any state college or university
- told the NAACP that "strong civil rights enforcement will be a cornerstone of my administration"
- advocates needs-based contracting and breaking down government contracts to smaller sizes to encourage entrepreneurship in all communities.

Governor Bush has spoken of "the soft bigotry of low expectations that traps disadvantaged children in failure." He also said, "Our common good is found in our common schools. And we must make those schools worthy of all our children. This, I believe, is the next advance in the cause of equality, the next frontier of civil rights."

Governor Bush has spoken of his support for the Americans With Disabilities Act, which his father was proud to sign. He has called for a "New Freedom Initiative" to commit \$1.025 billion over 5 years to expand access to assistive technology and to remove barriers of all kinds.

## Defense and National Security

"Peace is not ordained, it is earned. It is not a harbor where we rest, it is a voyage we must chart. . . . Not since the years before Pearl Harbor has our investment in national defense been so low as a percentage of GNP. Yet rarely has our military been so freely used — an average of one deployment every nine weeks in the last few years. Since the end of the Cold War, our ground forces have been deployed more frequently while our defense budget has fallen by nearly 40%."

### Governor Bush supports

- better pay, better treatment, and better training for our men and women in the Armed Services; his first budget will contain a billion dollars in salary increases
- salary bonuses for those with special skills
- renovation of military housing
- an immediate review of all overseas deployments
- at the earliest possible date, deployment of an anti-ballistic missile system
- strengthening the intelligence community
- preparing the military for future conflicts by, for example, earmarking 20 percent of the procurement budget "for acquisition programs that propel America generations ahead in military technology" and committing an additional \$20 billion over 5 years for research and development in defense technologies.

### Veterans

"What do we owe the brave? It is our first duty to remember what they have done. And that should not be hard, because it is one of the greatest stories of human history. Americans won world wars and a cold war. Kids fresh from farms and tenements humbled history's worst tyrants. They opened death camps and emptied Gulags. Their character was tested in death marches and jungle stalemates. And, in the end, they won the epic struggle to save liberty itself."

Governor Bush has said, "The veterans health-care system and the claims process need an overhauling from top to bottom. It needs to be modernized, so that claims are handled in a fair and timely fashion. Veterans need advocates in the Veterans Administration, people sympathetic to their interests instead of suspicious."

## Education

“Our nation has a moral duty to ensure that no child is left behind. We have a great national opportunity to ensure that every child, in every public school, is challenged by high standards that meet the high hopes of parents. We can build a culture of achievement that matches the optimism and aspirations of our country.”

“No parents in America — no matter their income — should be forced to send their child to a school where violence reigns. No child in America — regardless of background — should be forced to risk his or her life in order to learn.”

Governor Bush will reform the nation's public schools, as he has in Texas, which is one of two states that have made the greatest recent progress in education. He will close the achievement gap, set high standards, promote character education, and ensure school safety. States will be freed from federal regulation, but held accountable for results. Performance will be measured annually, and parents will be empowered with information and choices.

The RAND Corporation released a study on July 25, 2000, showing that education reforms in Texas have resulted in some of the highest achievement gains in the country: (1) Math scores in Texas have improved at twice the rate of the national average. (2) Texas African-American and non-Hispanic white fourth graders ranked first on NAEP math tests in 1996, and Texas Hispanic fourth graders ranked fifth. (3) The RAND study confirmed earlier reports that Texas is one of two States that has made the greatest overall academic gains in recent years.

### Governor Bush supports

- reduction of the 60 different categories of federal education grants to 5, namely: (1) improving achievement among disadvantaged children; (2) promoting fluency in English; (3) training and recruiting teachers; (4) encouraging character and school safety; and (5) promoting innovation and parental choice
- a lifetime ban on carrying or purchasing a gun for students who use guns illegally or bring guns to school, and adults who provide them
- a Teacher Protection Act to guarantee teachers, principals and school board members freedom from meritless lawsuits when they enforce reasonable rules
- annual, *State-chosen* tests on the basics of reading and math in grades three through eight
- a Charter School Homestead Fund to help finance start-up costs of charter schools
- expansion of Education Savings Accounts to cover education expenses in grades K through 12, allowing parents and grandparents to contribute up to \$5,000 dollars per year, per student
- a \$500 million fund to reward states and schools that improve student performance.

## **Environment and Natural Resources**

“Since the days of Teddy Roosevelt, there has been a consensus that Americans have a common interest in protecting our natural lands and watersheds. As president, I will speak for that great national goal. It is our duty to use the lands well, and sometimes not to use them at all. It is our responsibility as citizens, but more than that, it is our calling as stewards of the earth. But the Washington-centered mindset breeds resentments and needless conflict. The federal government and the States, local communities and private landowners, must respect and work with one another to preserve our natural heritage.”

### **Governor Bush supports**

- fully funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund and proposing that one-half of the funds be devoted to state and local conservation
- setting aside \$50 million to help States set up Landowner Incentive Programs similar to that now operating in Texas, and setting aside \$10 million for a Private Stewardship Program that gives grants to individuals and groups engaged in private-sector conservation
- establishing the President's Award for Private Stewardship to recognize outstanding examples of stewardship in the private sector
- amending the tax code to encourage conservation by giving a 50-percent tax break on the capital gains tax for land that is sold for conservation purposes (Under current law, tax benefits are available to those who donate their land, but many persons cannot afford to give away their land.)
- abolishing the death tax, a tax that can leave owners with no choice but to sell farmland or open space to developers so that the tax can be paid
- ensuring that the federal government, which is the country's largest polluter, complies with all environmental laws.

## Foreign Policy

"We live in the nation President Reagan restored, and the world he helped to save. A world of nations reunited and tyrants humbled. A world of prisoners released and exiles come home. There is a prayer shared by free people everywhere: God bless you, Ronald Reagan."

### For Asia, Governor Bush supports

- a realistic relationship between China and the United States as one of competitors, not strategic partners
- a permanent normal trade relationship with China (there are three reasons for his support: first, trade with China will promote freedom in China; second, trade with China will serve our own national interests and the security interests of China's neighbors; third, trade with China will serve America's own economic interests)
- a 'one-China' policy; the Taiwan Relations Act, the Taiwan Security Enhancement Act

### For Russia, Governor Bush supports

- working with Russia to achieve verifiable strategic arms reduction and to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, and pressing Moscow for an accurate inventory of all Russian nuclear material
- substantially increasing funding for the Nunn-Lugar program in order to dismantle as many of Russia's nuclear weapons as possible, as quickly as possible
- redirecting American assistance, investment, and loans to the Russian people, not to the bank accounts of corrupt officials (Governor Bush opposes any further IMF loans to Russia, and he would withhold international financial assistance from Russia because of that government's attacks on civilians in Chechnya)

### With respect to the United Nations / IMF / World Bank, Governor Bush supports

- keeping United States troops under United States command, not under U.N. command
- a U.N. role in weapons inspections, peacekeeping, and humanitarian efforts
- payment of dues to the United Nations only if its bureaucracy is reformed and America's disproportionate share of its costs is reduced
- reform at international financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank

Governor Bush supports moving the U.S. embassy in **Israel** from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and would immediately set the process in motion upon taking office. President Bush would work to re-establish weapons inspections in **Iraq**. Governor Bush supports keeping the current sanctions on **Cuba** until there are free elections, free speech, and freedom for political prisoners. Governor Bush supported U.S. intervention in **Kosovo** because it was in our strategic interests, but he said the option of ground troops should not have been taken off the table in Kosovo.

## Government Reform

"Governor Bush believes a strong leader focuses on solving problems, not settling scores. As President, he will restore honor and dignity to the White House, and set a new tone of respect and bipartisanship in Washington."

### Governor Bush supports

- an initial Federal budget that requires passage by both houses of Congress *and* the approval of the President
- biennial budgeting
- a change in law that will allow the government to keep functioning even if the appropriations bills are not enacted in a timely manner, thus eliminating the threat of a "government shutdown"
- a bipartisan commission on pork-barrel spending; the commission will make recommendations on eliminating wasteful spending and those recommendations will be voted up or down by Congress in a process similar to that Congress used for closing military bases
- increased authority for the President to refuse to spend wasteful appropriations
- a return to civility in the nominations process
- a reduction in the number of mid-level and senior-level managers in the Federal Government (80,000 will retire over the next 8 years; half of them should not be replaced)
- expansion of the use of the Internet to empower citizens
- enforcement of the Government Performance and Results Act to get government agencies to meet their goals
- making a majority of the government's service contracts performance-based, i.e., the government would pay for results and not spend its time in micromanagement
- measuring performance in the civil service and rewarding creative and successful employees.

## **Gun Laws**

### **Governor Bush supports**

- stronger enforcement of existing gun laws, and he would provide more funding for aggressive gun law enforcement programs, such as Project Exile in Richmond, VA
- automatic detention for kids who commit crimes with guns, banning juveniles from possession of semi-automatic "assault" weapons, and increasing the minimum age for lawful possession of a handgun from 18 to 21
- instant background checks at gun shows by allowing gun show promoters to access the instant check system on behalf of vendors
- law-abiding Americans' constitutional right to own guns to protect their families and home (and he opposes government-mandated registration of all guns owned by law-abiding citizens)
- the current ban on automatic weapons and banning the importation of foreign-made, "high-capacity" ammunition clips
- voluntary efforts to equip all handguns with child safety locks (If Congress passed a bill requiring mandatory trigger locks for all new handguns, President Bush would sign it. He is concerned, however, that such legislation not be seen as a panacea, because adults still have to be responsible for using the trigger locks and for monitoring their children.)

## **Health Care and the Uninsured**

There are 44 million uninsured Americans — 8 million more than when the Clinton-Gore Administration took office. Governor Bush will reverse this trend by making health insurance affordable for hard-working, low-income families. His plan will provide them with a \$2,000 refundable health credit so that they can purchase their own insurance. He will also make it easier for small businesses, which employ 60 percent of the uninsured, to obtain lower cost insurance through associations. Finally, Governor Bush will remove federal regulations that restrict state flexibility in designing and implementing programs for the uninsured. Governor Bush will put the consumer, not the government, in charge of health-care decisions.



## **Social Issues**

“Too often, my party has focused on the national economy to the exclusion of all else — speaking a sterile language of rates and numbers, of CBO this and GNP that. Of course, we want growth and vigor in our economy, but there are human problems that persist in the shadow of affluence. And the strongest argument for conservative ideals — for responsibility and accountability and the virtues of our tradition — is that they lead to greater justice, less suffering, more opportunity.”

### **Abortion and Related Issues**

Governor Bush is pro-life and supports abortion exceptions for rape, incest, and life of the mother. His goal is to see that all children are welcomed into life and protected by law.

Governor Bush supports

- efforts to increase adoptions; making permanent the \$5,000 adoption tax credit.
- parental notification when minors seek an abortion
- banning use of taxpayer funds for abortion and banning partial-birth abortion

Governor Bush opposes physician-assisted suicide. He believes the role of a doctor is to relieve pain and suffering, not to end life.

### **Marriage**

Governor and Mrs. Bush released a letter that read in part: “We commend the men and women of The Marriage Movement who have heard the call to strengthen this vital institution. Strengthening marriage will help families and children, build up civil society, boost opportunity, and spread social equality. . . .

“Today’s popular culture — and even government policies — have devalued family and the importance of marriage. Children in single-family homes are more likely to live in poverty, have problems at school, bear children out of wedlock, and fall victim to the lure of illegal drugs and other risky behavior. These children face tougher challenges in every area of life and at every stage. As a society, we face few greater challenges than to ensure that more of America’s children are raised by mothers and fathers in strong, healthy marriages. Being a single parent is one of the toughest jobs in America, and we salute those parents. Ours should be a society that offers them as much support as possible. We must also be a society that prizes marriage, the backbone of the family, and that helps more marriages succeed. . . .”

Governor Bush opposes same-sex “marriage”.

## **Social Issues (continued)**

### **Abstinence Education**

Governor Bush supports

- spending at least as much on abstinence education as on teen contraception programs
- ensuring that faith-based organizations can compete for federal abstinence-education grants
- initiating a study to determine the effectiveness of federally funded sex education programs.

### **Faith-Based Initiatives**

Governor Bush supports

- lifting federal regulations that hamper faith-based institutions from involvement in the delivery of services to the needy
- providing civil liability protection for corporate in-kind donations of equipment or facilities to charities
- expanding "Charitable Choice" to all federal social service programs, allowing religious organizations to be eligible for funding on the same basis as any other provider, without impairing their religious character
- establishing an Office of Faith-Based Action in the Executive Office of the President
- offering competitive grants to faith-based and community groups to address the needs of children of prisoners, and funding faith-based prison pre-release programs.

Governor Bush supports the following changes in the tax code:

- expanding the federal charitable deduction to taxpayers who do not itemize
- permitting a credit against state taxes for contributions to charities addressing poverty
- permitting individuals over 59 to contribute IRA funds to charities, without having to pay income tax on the amount withdrawn
- raising the cap on corporate charitable deductions from 10% to 15% of a company's taxable income.

## Social Security and Medicare

“Social Security is the single most successful government program in American history. Without it, more than half of all seniors would live in poverty. For millions — for parents and grandparents with little or no savings — it is the difference between destitution and dignity.”

### Social Security

Governor Bush supports

- *not* changing the program for those now receiving benefits or nearing retirement
- establishing a bipartisan commission to help pave the way to a consensus on reform
- leaving all Social Security funds now in the surplus dedicated to Social Security exclusively (Governor Bush’s economic plan locks up more than \$2 trillion of the surplus for Social Security.)
- *not* raising the payroll tax
- allowing young workers to establish personal retirement accounts wherein a portion of their payroll tax can be invested in stocks and bonds and used exclusively for retirement (or passed along as an inheritance).

### Medicare

Governor Bush will reform Medicare on a bipartisan basis so that seniors have access to prescription drugs and modern medicine. Not only is Medicare headed toward financial collapse, but its “one-size-fits-all” benefits package is outdated, covering neither prescription drugs nor other routine services, such as annual physicals, vision tests, and hearing aids. Governor Bush will reform Medicare itself by providing seniors with a prescription drug benefit, plus a choice of modern, comprehensive health plans. Governor Bush’s plan will also cover all expenses for low-income seniors.

## Taxes

“We believe in the profit motive — and in the Golden Rule. We are a land of rugged individualists who are committed to the common good. We want a prosperity as broad and diverse as America itself. So, my tax cut plan is not just about productivity, it is about people. Economics is more than narrow interests or organized envy. A tax plan must apply market principle to the public interest. And my plan sets out to make life better for average men, women, and children.”

Governor Bush believes that roughly one-quarter of the surplus should be returned to the people who earned it through broad tax cuts — otherwise, Washington will spend it. He believes that no middle-class family should face a federal income tax rate higher than 25 percent, and that no person in America should pay more than 33 percent of his or her paycheck to the Feds.

Governor Bush supports

- doubling the current child credit to \$1,000 per child
- replacing the current five-rate tax structure (15%, 28%, 31%, 36%, 39.6%) with four lower rates (10%, 15%, 25%, 33%) (Cutting the lower rate by a third — from 15% to 10%— and doubling the child credit will mean that a family of four with annual income of \$35,000 will pay no income tax, and that many families making under \$50,000 a year will see their income taxes cut in half; 6 million families will no longer pay federal income tax.)
- expanding the charitable deduction so that taxpayers who do not itemize their tax returns can deduct charitable contributions
- increasing the Educational Savings Accounts amount from \$500 to \$5,000 and expanding them beyond college — down to kindergarten
- eliminating the death tax
- restoring the 10-percent deduction for two-income married couples, thus greatly reducing the marriage penalty.

Governor Bush's tax-cut plan reserves all of the Social Security surplus for Social Security itself. None of it will be used either for new spending or for tax reductions. The plan balances the budget. It funds needed priorities, including defense and education. It reduces the national debt. And it ensures that the rest of the surplus is returned to the American people who earned it and deserve it.

## Technology and the New Economy

“Prosperity is not a given, and governments do not create it. Wealth is created by Americans — by creativity and enterprise and risk-taking. These are the hallmarks of the high-tech industry, where the great engine of wealth has become the human mind, creating value out of genius.”

Governor Bush understands that hard-working entrepreneurs — not government — created the New Economy. But, as he has shown in Texas, which leads the nation in high-tech job growth, government can create an environment in which entrepreneurs flourish: an environment that encourages innovation, rewards risk-taking, and promotes equal opportunity. Thus, as President, he will support the growth of the New Economy by cutting taxes, encouraging investment in R&D, curbing frivolous lawsuits, pursuing free trade and implementing sensible export controls. To ensure that all Americans share in the benefits of the New Economy, Governor Bush will reform education through high standards and accountability, accelerate e-government, and increase access to assistive technologies for Americans with disabilities.

### Governor Bush supports

- reauthorizing the Export Administration Act so long as export controls which do not serve any clear national-security purpose are eliminated
- spending \$20 billion on defense research and development over the next 5 years
- encouraging long-term private initiatives and investments by making the research and development tax credit permanent
- creating an advisory board on high-tech exports that will report directly to the president
- increasing the current limit on “H-1B” visas to allow high technology companies to have greater access to high-skilled workers such as computer engineers and programmers
- increasing efforts to combat piracy of American ideas and intellectual property.

Governor Bush has offered a comprehensive plan to reduce the threat of massive, unnecessary litigation. He understands that an assault on high-technology companies by trial lawyers could have a disastrous impact on the nation’s high-tech industries and the American economy as a whole.

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The Governor’s website was reviewed during the few days before the date of this paper. As noted on page 1, the website is updated periodically. This paper does not list all of Governor Bush’s proposals. Some of the statements from the website have been edited slightly.